

HOW TO WRITE A REPORT

Language and register

Reports are the most impersonal kind of writing and it is usually best to avoid expressing personal opinions or feelings, except, perhaps, in the conclusion. Instead of *I think that...* or *I found that...* for example, you can use the impersonal “It” construction and a passive, e.g. *It seems / It was found that ...* It is also advisable to avoid making very definite statements unless you’re absolutely sure they’re true. Instead of saying *It is* for example, you can use a modal verb e.g. *It could / may / might be* or a more tentative expression such as *It seems to be* or *It tends to be*. Never use contractions.

Layout and organisation

The information should be organised and presented as clearly and logically as possible, with a short **introduction** explaining the aims of the report and how the information was obtained. Reports should also have a clear factual **heading** and may also have **subheadings** which divide the writing into shorter sections, and, finally, a suitable **conclusion**, summing up the information and making recommendations if necessary.

Useful language

Introduction:

- *The aim of this report is to...*
- *It is based on...*
- *This report is intended to...*
- *It draws on / It uses...*
- *This report looks at / describes...*

Reporting an observation:

- *It seems / appears that...*
- *It was found that...*
- *The majority / minority of...*
- *It was felt that. ..*

Quoting:

- According to / In the words of...
- As X said / mentioned...

Speculating:

- It may / could / might (well) be that...

Generalising:

- In general,
- On the whole,
- All in all,
- All things considered,

Commenting:

- Interestingly, / Curiously,
- Strangely / As strange as it may seem, / Oddly,
- Surprisingly,
- As might be (have been) expected, / Predictably,
- It is interesting that...

Making a recommendation:

- It is recommended that...
- (Perhaps) it would be advisable for X to (do)...
- (Perhaps) X might / should consider...

Summing up:

- To sum up / To summarise / In summary,
- On balance,
- In short,